621 chief may, however, put one of his own relatives as headman or headwoman
624 over a village, *and here the composition of the community will be very mixed*, containing a group of royal relatives together with those belonging to the original village.

Enquiries in 1934 showed that 29% of the villages in the Paramount Chief's territory were new titles, 16% had had one previous holder of the headmanship, 10% two previous holders, and 40% three previous holders. In the case of Chief Nkula's district, new villages form 42%, those with one previous holder 9%, those with two previous holders 18% and those with thre 13%. The remaining villages in both cases were formed by the amalgamation of two or more old villages.(1)

621 All Bemba villages are, however, liable to change in personnel. Young boys leave to marry and may return again when they have become fathers. Men come from outside to marry girls in the village and may later take them away. The practice of shifting villages every few years provides opportunities for such changes in village composition.

634 The members of a village acknowledge the authority of a chief who rules over a district (*icalo*) which is a geographical unit with a more or less fixed boundary and name. According to Richards these date from the past and represent territories originally allotted to members of the royal clan. It is clear, however, that some further sub-divisions of territory have taken place. Brelsford gives examples of the division of a district by a chief, and its reallocation to his son instead of to his uterine nephew.(2) It is not quite clear how far the political territory, with a fixed name and boundary, exists amongst the smaller tribes in this area.

Each district has its own capital (*musumba*), where the chief lives, and forms a separate political unit. Its inhabitants pay tribute to the chief of the district and in the old days went to fight for him on request. Law cases are taken to the chief's capital for trial and each territory is a
[643] ritual unit in the sense that its chief performs the economic rites of the year for its inhabitants. The Paramount Chief, like the lesser chiefs, has his own territory which he administers, but the word "*icalo*" is also used for the whole of the Bemba country.

POLITICAL STRUCTURE

624 The main political authorities are the headmen, known as the "owners" of villages, the district chiefs and the Paramount Chief. The headman derives his authority from his position as head of a kin group which gives him authority over them and the right of access to the ancestral spirits. He may be said to look after his villagers. As a senior kinsman he is responsible for the maintenance of discipline among the young; he directs communal forms of hunting and fishing. He hears cases informally and initiates the cycle of agricultural activities every year. Since land is not scarce the allocation of land for cultivation is not an important function of the headman, but he acts as arbitrator in any quarrels that may arise over its use. Ritually he offers prayers at a village shrine to his ancestors,

(1) Richards, 6, 1939. Appendix D. (2) Brelsford, 3, 1944

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A chief's village (*umuzumbu*) is very much larger than that of a commoner. Inhabitants of the capital are composed of relatives of the chief, his followers, and also a number of families which moved there originally to win royal favour and have become accustomed to court life.[1] Since a chief's reputation depends largely on the size of his capital, and his councillors, courtiers, and administrative officers were drawn largely from his villagers, the *umuzumbu* is an important unit in the political machine. The late Nkula's village had about 400 huts when I visited it in 1931, that of the Citimukulu 150 in 1938. The capitals of pre-European days were evidently very much larger. These communities were divided into sections (*ifitente*, sing. *icitente*) and though nowadays there are nine *ifitente* at the paramount's village, there were formerly thirty to forty, according to native accounts.

The whole Bemba territory is divided into districts (*ifyalo*, sing. *icalo*). The *icalo* is a geographical unit with a fixed boundary and a name dating from historical times, e.g. the district of the Citimukulu is known as Lubemba, the country of the Bemba, and that of Mwamba, Ituna. These districts are territories originally allotted to members of the royal family, but once so divided they have never been sub-divided to provide smaller chieftainships for a new generation of princes as has happened in some parts of South Africa.

But the *icalo* is also a political unit. It is the district ruled over by a chief with a fixed title—the name of the first ruler to be appointed over each particular strip of land, always a close relative of one of the earlier Citimukulus. There are several types of chief, the paramount, who has his own *icalo*, as well as being overlord of the whole Bemba territory; the territorial chiefs, five or more in number, who have under them sub-chiefs who may rule over very small tracts of country or, rather, over a few villages.[2]

Each of these chiefs is known by the same title *mfumu* and each *icalo* is a more or less self-contained unit, a replica of the social structure of the other. Each capital has its own court, however small. Each chief has rights over the labour of his own villages. They work for him only and not for the paramount as happens among

[1] The phrase '*umuntu wa muzumbu*' ('inhabitant of the capital') is used to indicate a 'chief's man' or a person of specially polished manners and knowledge of affairs.

[2] Mwamba has as a sub-chief, the Munkonge, and the Nkula has Shimwalule, Mwaba, Mukunkile, Nkweto, &c.

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634 622 778 the Zulu, Swazi and other tribes with the regiment system. The *icalo* is also a ritual unit. At each capital are the sacred relics (*babenye*) of the first holders of the chiefly title and their ancestral spirits are thought to act as tutelary deities of the district, and are worshipped at the amarumbo, at village shrines, and old hut sites throughout the country, and are also commonly supposed to act as guardian spirits to children born within the *icalo*.[1] Naturally the ritual and political organization of the paramount's capital is more elaborate than that of his inferiors, but even the smallest sub-chief maintains his miniature court and tries to ape the state of those above him, while the bigger territorial chiefs sometimes rivalled the power of the Citimukulu in the old days.

622 631 643 The territorial chieftainships are arranged in order of precedence, according to their nearness to the centre of the country—Lubemba—and the antiquity of their office. To the most important of these chiefdoms—the Mwambaship, the Nkulaship, the Nkolemfumuship, and the Mpepoship, for instances—the Citimukulu appoints his nearest relatives, the one succeeding the other in order of seniority. Thus the present Citimukulu, Kanyanta, has acted in turn as the Nkolemfumu, and the Mwamba before succeeding to the paramountcy (cf. chart on p. 102). On the other hand, the sub-chieftainships have tended to become concentrated in local branches of the royal family, and the paramount's strong grip over the country and his intimate knowledge of affairs at the courts of his fellow chiefs is certainly weaker in these outlying districts than in the case of chiefdoms ruled by his close relatives.

641 To the commoner, membership of an *icalo* means his allegiance to the chief of that territory. He will describe himself as an inhabitant of a district, such as *Icinga*, i.e. *muine Icinga* or, alternatively, as the subject of its chief, Nkula, i.e. *muine Nkula*, and both terms are synonymous. He may move from village to village within the *icalo*, but he remains his chief's man. The latter, in his turn, reckons his assets, not in terms of the size of his territory or its natural resources, but rather by the number of his people and in particular the villages he has under his rule.

554 565 (3) *Rank*. Rank is a marked feature of Bemba society. It is based on kinship, real or fictitious, with the chief. All members of the royal crocodile clan (*Bena ngandu*) are entitled to special respect, precedence on ritual and social occasions, and sometimes

[1] Hence the great preponderance of one or two birth-names in each district.

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V. The Machinery of Government

Within each district there are a series of officials, messengers, &c., who carry out the activities of government and the different forms of ritual on which the chief's power depends. Some of these are personal followers of the chief promoted by him for their special loyalty (e.g. the *bafilolo*, *basano*), while others are hereditary officials who are more independent of their ruler's favour (e.g. *bafilolo* and *bafingo*). All these different dignitaries can be classed under various functional heads, i.e.:

(*a*) *Administrative*. These include the executive officials in charge of business in the *umuzumbu* and those responsible for carrying out the chief's orders in the *icalo* at large. Within the capital the most important are the heads of divisions (*bafilolo*), who are appointed from among the chief's personal friends. These are charged with keeping the peace of the village, organizing the tribute labour from the capital, allotting land for cultivation, which is often necessary in the bigger settlements, arranging hospitality for visitors—an important task at the capital—and acting as a panel of advisers on all occasions (cf. 'Judicial', below). Besides these elder men, there are at the *umuzumbu* a number of courtiers and in the old days young men (*bakalume ba mfumu*). Young boys, often members of the royal clan, were, and still occasionally are, sent to court to be educated there, and some families remain as courtiers for several generations apparently. All these act as messengers, attendants, and in the old days took duty as executioners.

As regards the country at large, the main difficulty was keeping in touch with the scattered villages. The Bemba have no general meeting like the *pitso* of the Sotho peoples or the *libandla* of the Nguni. For the chief's orders to be conveyed to his villages, messengers have to go to and fro. Other officers are required to recruit the tribute labourers and to demand beer or produce for the chief, and to apprehend criminals. Since some villages are sixty miles or so from the capital, an enormous amount of time is spent in coming and going in this way and even with the introduction of the bicycle a great many messengers of one sort or another are still required. In the old days courtiers and younger relatives of the chief acted in this capacity. Nowadays they have anything from four to

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twelve uniformed messengers, *kapanus*, and for the rest they go short of service.

(*b*) *Military*. There was no general military organization in this tribe, but attached to each big court were one or two captains (*bashika*). Some of these were hereditary, with ritual functions connected with war magic, and others appointed at the chief's will. They now act as specially trusted messengers.

(*c*) *Judicial*. There is no fixed composition to a Bemba court, although its procedure is laid down by custom. At a small chief's court, the elderly men of the village attend, while the *bafilolo* act as advisers at the big *imisumba*. Cases go on appeal from sub-chief to chief, chief to paramount, and in the event of a case of extreme difficulty presenting itself, the Citimukulu can summon from their villages some of his hereditary priests or councillors, the *bakabilo* (cf. below). Witnesses are brought by each party to a case and are marshalled by the *bafilolo*. The senior man present claps as each point is made to mark the recognition of the court, and the chief himself finally sums up and gives judgement. The advisers speak when asked a point of precedent or law, and influence the chief's final decision by black looks or alternatively enthusiastic clappings of the hand.

(*d*) *Advisory*. There is no council or meeting of all the adult men of the tribe for special occasions, as among many Southern Bantu. Sub-chiefs have a panel of village elders and relatives to advise them, while the biggest territorial chiefs have hereditary officials who combine political and judicial with ritual functions. In the case of the paramount, these officials—the *bakabilo*—number between thirty-five and forty and form an advisory council on special matters of State. The *bakabilo* have been described as having descent as long as that of the chief himself in many cases and possess sacred relics in their own rights. The power of these relics is so strong that the Citimukulu is not permitted to pass through their villages for fear that one chieftainship should harm the other. *Bakabilo* are immune from tribute, wore special feather head-dresses in the old days, and even now claim special respect equal to that given to a chief when travelling about the country. They call themselves *Fwe Babemba* ('We, the Babemba'), may not leave the central territory (Lubemba) for long, must be buried within the royal district, and keep sex taboos similar to those of the chiefs. They succeed by a special accession

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the old days are an example. The big *tribal* councils of most of the African peoples described as being attended by 'every one' and in reality very large meetings, must also act as occasions when the loyalty of the tribe is fostered. Among the Bemba much of the tribal ritual is secret, as has been shown, and the advisory council is composed of what might be called an aristocratic caste. If the *bakabilo* meet in sitting on the open ground in the capital, as I have seen happen, they use archaic language on purpose, so that the common people cannot understand. It is no occasion for high-flown oratory or any of the demagogue's arts. On the other hand, the Bemba chiefs were formerly considered very nearly divine, and the belief in their supernatural powers is still strong enough to integrate the tribe. The sacredness of the royal ceremonial largely depends on its secrecy and the fact that only persons of the right descent can take their part in the ritual. The ordinary people do not attend the ceremonies except in the case of some inhabitants of the capital, but they value their secret nature and speak contemptuously of the Bisa and neighbouring tribes with less complex rites. The number of the *bakabilo*, each scattered through the chief's *icalo* and each with his own ritual function, sometimes secret from his own fellows, also adds to the strength of the whole ceremonial system. Each is insistent that *his* part is absolutely essential to the welfare of the tribe, and his own village is convinced to that effect, too. Another integrating factor is the belief in royal descent and presence in the society of such a large number of men and women who claim chiefly rank. These are dispersed all over the country, generally in charge of villages, and they naturally support the chiefs from whom they derive their power.

As regards the activities of the different *ifyalo*, it has been seen that these are self-contained units and there is no regular provision for regular meetings of *icalo* heads. They are linked by the overlordship of the paramount, who acts as judge of their court of appeal, and the different tiny states are bound together because of the close relationship between their different chiefs. Messengers constantly go from one court to another to inquire after family matters, the children of one chief are sent to be brought up at the capital of another, the chiefs themselves take office first in one *icalo* and then another, and even the Citimukulu takes no important step, ritual or political, without consulting his 'brothers', the big territorial heads.